

Re “Expert Panel Is Critical of F.B.I. Work in Investigating Anthrax Letters” (news article, Feb. 16):

The National Academy of Sciences, in issuing its much-anticipated report on the F.B.I.’s use of scientific and technical evidence during its investigation of the 2001 anthrax attacks, concluded that there needs to be further investigation of the attacks and the federal government’s response to and investigation of the attacks.

Recently, I reintroduced legislation to create an independent commission modeled after the 9/11 Commission to review the entire episode: the attacks, the response, the botched investigation and, ultimately, to determine whether our nation is prepared to deal with a biological attack in the future.

The commission would make recommendations to the president and Congress on how the country can best prevent and respond to any future bioterrorism attack. This legislation can be passed now, just as it could have been enacted any time in the last four years.

We need the most advanced and well-vetted bioterrorism prevention, detection, forensics and recovery capabilities, and not simply to ensure the swift apprehension and prosecution of future perpetrators.

In the anthrax case, the F.B.I.’s jumping to conclusions led to tragic consequences for a relatively limited number of people. Another bioterror attack on this country could catapult us into war if it is as poorly investigated as the last one and if, based on faulty investigation, it is attributed to the wrong foreign state. It is long past time that we learned the right lessons from the anthrax case.